WHAT IS CLAIMED AS NEW AND DESIRED TO BE SECURED BY LETTERS PATENT OF THE UNITED STATES IS:

1. A bacteria strain characterized by exhibiting: (a) a 7α-dehydroxylase activity of less than 50%, and (b) a bile acid deconjugation activity of less than 50%, and descendants, mutants and derivatives thereof preserving activities (a) and (b).

2. The strain of claim 1, which is a gram-positive bacteria strain.

3. The strain of Claim 1, belonging to a species selected from *Streptococcus thermophilus, Streptococcus faecium, and Lactobacillus bulgaricus*.

4. The strain of Claim 3, wherein the bacteria strain is *Streptococcus thermophilus* YS 52 deposited with the CNCM, Collection Nationale de Cultures de Microorganismes, Institut Pasteur, under the accession number I-1670.

5. The strain of Claim 3, wherein the bacteria strain is *Streptococcus thermophilus* YS 46, deposited with the CNCM, Collection Nationale de Cultures de Microorganismes, Institut Pasteur, under the accession number I-1668.

6. The strain of Claim 3, wherein the bacteria strain is *Streptococcus thermophilus* YS 48, deposited with the CNCM, Collection Nationale de Cultures de Microorganismes, Institut Pasteur, under the accession number I-1669.

7. The strain of Claim 3, wherein the bacteria strain is *Streptococcus faecium* SF 3, deposited with the CNCM, Collection Nationale de Cultures de Microorganismes, Institut Pasteur, under the accession number I-1671.

8. The strain of Claim 3, wherein the bacteria strain is *Lactobacillus bulgaricus* LB 1 deposited with the CNCM, Collection Nationale de Cultures de Microorganismes, Institut Pasteur, under the accession number I-1664.

9. The strain of Claim 3, wherein the bacteria strain is *Lactobacillus bulgaricus* LB 3 deposited with the CNCM, Collection Nationale de Cultures de Microorganismes, Institut Pasteur, under the accession number I-1665.

10. The strain of Claim 3, wherein the bacteria strain is *Lactobacillus bulgaricus* LB 7 deposited with the CNCM, Collection Nationale de Cultures de Microorganismes, Institut Pasteur, under the accession number I-1666.

11. The strain of Claim 3, wherein the bacteria strain is *Lactobacillus bulgaricus* LB 77 deposited with the

CNCM, Collection Nationale de Cultures de Microorganismes, Institut Pasteur, under the accession number I-1667.

12. A pharmaceutical composition for preventing and/or treating diseases associated with or caused by an altered metabolism of bile acids, comprising an effective amount capable of producing a normalizing effect on such an altered metabolism in a patient suffering therefrom, of

(1) at least one bacteria strain provided with: (a) a 7α-dehydroxylase activity of less than 50%, and (b) a bile acid deconjugation activity of less than 50%, and descendants, mutants and derivatives thereof preserving activities (a) and (b), and

(2) a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier.

13. The pharmaceutical composition of claim 12, wherein said at least one bacteria strain is a gram-positive bacteria strain.

14. The composition of Claim 12, wherein said at least one bacteria strain belongs to a species selected from the group consisting of *Streptococcus thermophilus*, *Streptococcus faecium*, and *Lactobacillus bulgaricus*.

15. The composition of Claim 14, wherein the bacteria strain is *Streptococcus thermophilus* YS 52 deposited with

the CNCM, Collection Nationale de Cultures de Microorganismes, Institut Pasteur, under the accession number I-1670.

16. The composition of Claim 14, wherein the bacteria strain is *Streptococcus thermophilus* YS 46 deposited with the CNCM, Collection Nationale de Cultures de Microorganismes, Institut Pasteur, under the accession number I-1668.

17. The composition of Claim 14, wherein the bacteria strain is *Streptococcus thermophilus* YS 48 deposited with the CNCM, Collection Nationale de Cultures de Microorganismes, Institut Pasteur, under the accession number I-1669.

18. The composition of Claim 14, wherein the bacteria strain is *Streptococcus faecium* SF 3 deposited with the CNCM, Collection Nationale de Cultures de Microorganismes, Institut Pasteur, under the accession number I-1671.

19. The composition of Claim 14, wherein the bacteria strain is *Lactobacillus bulgaricus* LB 1 deposited with the CNCM, Collection Nationale de Cultures de Microorganismes, Institut Pasteur, under the accession number I-1664.

20. The composition of Claim 14, wherein the bacteria strain is *Lactobacillus bulgaricus* LB 3 deposited with the CNCM, Collection Nationale de Cultures de Microorganismes, Institut Pasteur, under the accession number I-1665.

21. The composition of Claim 14, wherein the bacteria strain is *Lactobacillus bulgaricus* LB 7 deposited with the CNCM, Collection Nationale de Cultures de Microorganismes, Institut Pasteur, under the accession number I-1666.

22. The composition of Claim 14, wherein the bacteria strain is *Lactobacillus bulgaricus* LB 77 deposited with the CNCM, Collection Nationale de Cultures de Microorganismes, Institut Pasteur, under the accession number I-1667.

23. The composition of Claim 12, comprising 10^3 to 10^{13} cells of the bacteria strain per gram of composition.

24. The composition of Claim 12, further comprising lactulose.

25. The composition of Claim 12, further comprising bile acid-based preparations, such as ursodeoxycholic acid and tauroursodeoxycholic acid.

26. A method for preventing and treating diseases caused by or associated with an altered metabolism of bile

acids, said method comprising administering at least one bacteria strain characterized by exhibiting:

(a) a 7α-dehydroxylase activity of less than 50%, and

(b) a bile acid deconjugation activity of less than 50%, and descendants, or a mutant or derivative thereof preserving activities (a) and (b).

27. A method of claim 26, wherein the at least one bacteria strain is a gram-positive bacteria strain.

28. The method of Claim 26, wherein the bacteria strain belongs to a species selected from the group consisting of *Streptococcus thermophilus*, *Streptococcus faecium*, and *Lactobacillus bulgaricus*.

29. The method of Claim 28, wherein the bacteria strain is *Streptococcus thermophilus* YS 52 deposited with the CNCM, Collection Nationale de Cultures de Microorganismes, Institut Pasteur, under the accession number I-1670.

30. The method of Claim 28, wherein the bacteria strain is *Streptococcus thermophilus* YS 46 deposited with the CNCM, Collection Nationale de Cultures de Microorganismes, Institut Pasteur, under the accession number I-1668.

31. The method of Claim 28, wherein the bacteria strain is *Streptococcus thermophilus* YS 48 deposited with the CNCM, Collection Nationale de Cultures de Microorganismes, Institut Pasteur, under the accession number I-1669.

32. The method of Claim 28, wherein the bacteria strain is *Streptococcus faecium* SF 3 deposited with the CNCM, Collection Nationale de Cultures de Microorganismes, Institut Pasteur, under the accession number I-1671.

33. The method of Claim 28, wherein the bacteria strain is *Lactobacillus bulgaricus* LB 1 deposited with the CNCM, Collection Nationale de Cultures de Microorganismes, Institut Pasteur, under the accession number I-1664.

34. The method of Claim 28, wherein the bacteria strain is *Lactobacillus bulgaricus* LB 3 deposited with the CNCM, Collection Nationale de Cultures de Microorganismes, Institut Pasteur, under the accession number I-1665.

35. The method of Claim 28, wherein the bacteria strain is *Lactobacillus bulgaricus* LB 7 deposited with the CNCM, Collection Nationale de Cultures de Microorganismes, Institut Pasteur, under the accession number I-1666.

36. The method of Claim 28, wherein the bacteria strain is *Lactobacillus bulgaricus* LB 77 deposited with the CNCM, Collection Nationale de Cultures de Microorganismes, Institut Pasteur, under the accession number I-1667.

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